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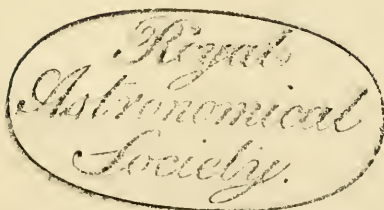


A SERMON,

&c.

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THE  
CHARACTER AND OBLIGATIONS

OF  
**Christian Ministers:**

**A SERMON,**

(PREACHED AT THE PRIMARY VISITATION

OF  
*THE VENERABLE*  
THE ARCHDEACON OF BEDFORD,

IN THE  
PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, BEDFORD,  
APRIL 8, 1823.

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PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE ARCHDEACON,  
AND THE CLERGY PRESENT.)

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BY THOMAS BARBER, B.D.,

(RECTOR OF HOUGHTON CONQUEST, BEDS.  
AND LATE FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.) 48 p.

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1823

Ministers  
Education

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TO  
THE VENERABLE  
HENRY KAYE BONNEY, M.A.  
*THE ARCHDEACON,*

AND  
TO THE REVEREND  
*THE CLERGY*  
OF THE  
ARCHDEACONRY OF BEDFORD,

**The following Discourse**

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THEIR

OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT

THE AUTHOR.





***T**HE Author of the following Discourse has to express his regret to those Clergymen who requested him to print it, that its publication should have been delayed so long after its delivery. He begs leave to state, however, that the delay has arisen from unavoidable engagements which prevented him from revising it sooner for the press. The additions which have been made he hopes will not render it less worthy of the attention of his Clerical Brethren, or of that of the Public.*



# A SERMON,

&c. &c.

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2 CORINTHIANS, II. 15, 16, 17.

*We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

OF all the passages of Scripture which touch upon the priestly office, there is none, perhaps, which places it in a more awful and important light, than that which I have here recited. The intimate union of ministers with Christ, their head; the consequent favour of God, and the discordant sentiments of men, towards them; the arduous duties, and momentous consequences, of their office, implied in this apostolic declaration, commend it, at all times, with peculiar force and propriety, to our serious attention, and may, therefore, form a suitable, and, by the blessing of God, a profitable subject for our present consideration.

It may be reduced to the following propositions :

- I. The favourable disposition with which God, for Christ's sake, regards the faithful ministers of his word.—“ We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.”
- II. The discordant sentiments with which they are regarded by men.—“ To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life.”
- III. The arduous and important duties of their office.—“ Who is sufficient for these things?”

I. The favourable disposition with which God, for Christ's sake, regards the faithful ministers of his word.—“ We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.”

It is evident from this expression, figurative as it is, that the faithful teachers of Christ's religion are honoured with the approbation of God, and that they owe the distinction to their connection with Christ. They are unto God a sweet savour, but it is a savour of Christ : an emanation from that sacrifice which never fails to appease the wrath, and conciliate the favour of God, towards those on whom its odours rest.

To a Being in whose eyes the angels which surround his throne are chargeable with folly, and the heavens in which he dwells are not clean, fallen, sinful man, can surely of himself have

nothing to recommend him. Such, indeed, is the holiness, such the jealousy of God, and such the effects of the fall upon the descendants of Adam, that God could no longer view them with complacency, except through the intervention of a Mediator. To provide a Mediator, therefore, of dignity and merit commensurate with the necessities of the occasion, he ordained that one person of the Godhead should be united to one of his fallen creatures, so that, in the person of a Mediator, thus connected, by the closest affinity, with God and Man, a communication might be opened between them, by which God might, in mercy and truth, descend to man, and man, in gratitude and love, might ascend to God; and thus a reconciliation might be effected between the Father and his alienated children, and a restitution to that image and favour of God, which they forfeited in the defection of the first Adam.

In pursuance of these important objects, a provision is made in the death and merits of Christ, for the pardon of sin, and for the regeneration of the human heart. For by the death of Christ atonement is made for sin, and, by the merits of Christ, the Spirit is obtained to renew the heart. But the death of Christ, though sufficient of itself to cancel the sins of the whole world, is effectual to such only as are regenerated by the Spirit. And although the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, yet every man does not receive him, does not profit by his agency. Many, many, on the contrary, reject his counsel,

and renounce his aid. But to every one who willingly receives and entertains him, He imparts a principle of divine grace which quickens the soul, and conceives the sinner anew the son of God, and a member of Christ. Christ, therefore, having the nature of man, and man the spirit of Christ, there is a mutual interchange of property and condition, by which the wrath of God, due to the transgression of his law, is transferred from man to Christ, and the favour of God, due to perfect obedience, is transferred from Christ to man.

Thus is man reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and thus is he regenerated in heart by the Holy Ghost. But these are only the fundamental principles, the preparatory steps of that divine life by which the Christian is gradually assimilated to Christ, and finally fitted for the kingdom of heaven. His sins may have been pardoned, and his mind renovated; but the new disposition which has been communicated is yet in its infancy, is weak, is tender; while the original infection of nature, the concupiscence of the natural man, still remains, and, though weakened, still operates within him. It operates not merely to check the growth of the religious principle, but to subvert it. And the child of God, though created anew in righteousness and true holiness, and though the object of adoption and grace, is with labour and difficulty reared up into the full-grown man of Christ. That confirmed sanctity of character, that holy habitude of the inner man, which constitutes the essential qualification for

heaven, and, therefore, the end of true religion, is formed by slow degrees, and painful discipline. It is formed amidst the strife of discordant, irreconcilable principles, the lust of the flesh, and the will of the Spirit, and of the infinitely varied modifications of depraved appetite, and holy disposition which spring from those principles. The life of the Christian, therefore, is a spiritual warfare, an agonistic contest, in which he requires not only a renewed heart, an initial bias of the will and affections to holiness, but constant succour and powerful incitements. For these a provision is made in the Christian dispensation through the instrumentality of faith in Christ. For through faith, the Christian is united to Christ, as the members are to the head, or the branches to the vine. Through faith, therefore, he derives spiritual nourishment from Christ, and is strengthened with might in the inner man. And through faith he derives from the gospel the most powerful incitements to exert the strength, thus imparted to him, in the cultivation of a holy life. Through faith the gospel becomes the power of God to his salvation. Giving substance to things hoped for, and evidence to things not seen, it invests them with their full and proper authority over his understanding and his heart. It realizes the weighty and distant interests of the next world, brings them near, and places them immediately before his eyes. Connecting his temporal conduct immediately with his future condition, it imparts to every disposition of his



heart, to every action of his life, that consequence which is due to a sober and solemn apprehension of eternity. Faith, therefore, not only unites him to Christ, and entitles him to those spiritual succours which are from above, but it supplies him with those strong incitements of hope and fear, which keep him constantly alive to the one thing needful, and impel him strenuously to co-operate with the grace of God in the progressive attainment of that holiness of heart and life, by which he is assimilated to Christ, and finally prepared for the kingdom of heaven.

To this mystical union, and to this congruity of temper with Christ, Christians, in general, owe that favourable disposition of God towards them, of which I am treating. They are hence unto God a savour, a sweet savour of Christ. Partaking of his likeness, they partake of that peculiar favour, with which God regards him.

But if such be the case of true Christians in general, it is surely the case of the faithful ministers of Christ, in a more eminent degree. For they enjoy, by virtue of their office, advantages which other Christians do not possess. Called of God by an inward anointing and gift of the Spirit, as well as by an outward vocation and ordination of the Church, they are consecrated exclusively to his service, in subordination to Christ, the High Priest of their profession. They are fellow-labourers with Christ. They are inferior pastors under the great Shepherd of the sheep. They are ambassadors of Christ, sent,



under his regal authority, to make manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place. They are his servants, therefore, in a public, as well as a private capacity ; not only in reference to their own salvation, but to the salvation of others. Constantly surrounding the altar on which the Son of God was immolated, they are more redolent of the incense which ascends from it, and, therefore, more acceptable to God, than other Christians.

Nor does the favourable disposition of God towards them depend at all upon the success of their labours. It rests upon a distinct foundation. It rests upon the two-fold basis of their personal resemblance to Christ, and of the fidelity with which they discharge the duties of their office. However acceptable to God (who would have all men to be saved) the success of their labours might be, or however gratifying to themselves, we know that the preaching of the gospel was, even in the hands of our Lord and his Apostles, frequently a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, and that while some believed to the saving of their souls, some believed not, and perished in their sins.

Let not the ministers of Christ, therefore, be surprized or dejected, if, after all they can do to save them, many of their hearers persist and die in their sins. Rather let them encourage themselves with the assurance, that, if they labour to resemble Christ in the temper of their mind, and faithfully perform their official duties, they

will be unto God as sweet a savour of Christ, in them that perish, as in them that are saved.

I pass on to shew,

II. The discordant sentiments with which they are viewed by men.—“To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life.”

Although the characters of men appear, to our imperfect discrimination, under a great variety of moral distinction, yet in the sight of God (to whom all hearts are open) and in the language of the New Testament, they are reduced to two classes only, the righteous and the wicked, saints and sinners, the children of God and the children of the devil, children of light and children of darkness, members of Christ and sons of Belial. The gospel never speaks of men as in a neutral state, with respect to religion. It arranges the whole human race under one or other of these classes. “He that is not for us, is against us.” There may be considerable difference of religious attainment, or of moral degradation, subsisting between the individuals of each class. Among the righteous, for instance, there may be babes in Christ, as well as full grown men of God. And of the wicked, while some may be abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, and fit associates for the spirits of darkness, others may not be far from the kingdom of God. But though the true vine and the wild olive, have their tender, as well as their stronger branches,

yet they are of the same nature as the stock from which they respectively spring. And there is a similar distinction of principle between the weakest and most imperfect of the children of God, and the most upright and amiable of the children of this world. Though a man should speak with the tongue of men and angels, though he should have miraculous gifts, should give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, yet if he have not true charity, if he have not the essential principle of Christ's religion, it profiteth him nothing. That inward principle of holiness by which the true disciples of Christ are actuated, and without which religion is a dead letter, raises them higher in the estimation of God, than any external gifts can do, however honourable they may be in the eyes of men. So clear, and so important, is the essential distinction, by which the nearest confines of the Church of Christ and the kingdom of Satan are separated from each other.

It is a distinction, however, which does not originate with the members of Christ themselves. It is the gift of God through Christ. It springs from that regeneration of heart, of which I have already spoken, and which is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is, in its origin, an incorruptible seed, cast into the heart by the Holy Ghost, which quickens the soul into spiritual life, but of which the after cultivation and future maturity, are left to the union of divine grace and human endeavour. By virtue of this change, they who

experience it, are not only reconciled to God, but receive a new disposition of mind ; while all others who resist the Holy Ghost, continue carnally minded and at enmity against God. Of these two great divisions of mankind, one is in a state of union with Christ, and of favour with God ; the other, of alienation and wrath. And should they persevere in this state to the end of their lives, one will be saved, and the other perish ; and, during their transit through this world, the sentiments which they entertain, not only of religion itself, but of its ministers also, are as discordant as their principles and their characters.

“ To the one,” says the Apostle, “ we are a savour of death unto death, and to the other a savour of life unto life.”

1. To the one we are a savour of life unto life.

The ministers, the faithful ministers of Christ, (and I speak of such only,) are highly esteemed by all true Christians for the holiness of their lives, and the utility of their labours.

They are highly esteemed for the holiness of their lives.

Holiness, of which love or charity is only one of the properties, is, as I have already shewn, essential to the character of all true Christians. And the love of holiness is the quality which pervades the spiritual world, and unites the members of the church of Christ to each other, to their Saviour, and to God, as the principle of gravitation, the great physical bond of the uni-

verse, preserves, in subjection to the will of God, the material world in indissoluble union. The esteem, therefore, which Christians entertain for any moral agent, rises in proportion to the degree of this principle by which he is distinguished. And since God is supremely holy, they love him with supreme affection; or, as Scripture emphatically expresses it, with all their heart, with all their mind, with all their soul, and with all their strength. And since the Son is equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead, and is holy even as God is holy, they love the Son as they love the Father; and, of consequence, all their Christian brethren, in due gradation of esteem, as they resemble their Lord and Master in this essential property of his divine character. They esteem his ministers, therefore, on the ground of their resemblance to him, or the holiness of their lives. Though dead to sin and the world, his ministers live unto God; yet not they, but Christ liveth in them, and the life which they now live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God. Such a holy life, by which the ministers themselves are prepared for life eternal, is more grateful to the minds of their pious hearers, than the odour of the sweetest flowers, or of the richest incense is to the sense. And the ministers who, by such a life, diffuse this spiritual, vivifying fragrance around them, are, to such Christians, a savour of life unto life, of that probationary exercise of faith in Christ, which has its fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.



But ministers are esteemed by true Christians, not only for the holiness of their lives, or from a principle of approbation, but from a motive of gratitude, or for the utility of their labours.

For they are the ordinary instruments by which Christ carries on the administration of his spiritual kingdom. When he gave to the Apostles their high and holy commission to go into all the world, and teach the gospel to every creature, he assured them that he would be with them alway, even unto the end of the world. Nor has he, accordingly, ever left their successors destitute or comfortless. For though ascended up on high, though exalted far above out of their sight, he is still united to them by faith, still holds communion with them, still dwells in them, by his Spirit, and still endows them with gifts from above, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Thus appointed, thus qualified, and thus aided in the exercise of their office, they are made instrumental in bringing men to the first principles of the oracles of God, to faith, repentance, and conversion, and in afterwards building them up, on this sure foundation, a holy temple unto the Lord, and in preparing them, by a life of progressive holiness here, for life eternal hereafter. The labours of Christian ministers, therefore, are of great consequence to the spiritual improvement and final salvation of them that are saved. To such, therefore, ministers themselves are highly acceptable for their work's sake, and esteemed

from a principle of gratitude. They savour of that life of holiness which they are so instrumental in imparting to others ; of that life which the pious part of their hearers are actually leading, of that life which constitutes the enjoyment of the righteous here, the evidence of their union with Christ, of the favour of God, and of the hope of everlasting life.

If the ministers of religion, however, are thus a savour of life unto life to them that are saved, they are,

2. To them that perish, a savour of death unto death.

That sanctity of life, and those sacred labours, which render ministers a savour of life to them that are saved, are the very causes which produce offence and alienation in them that perish. It is natural that they who are at enmity against God, should feel something of the same disposition towards those who, in any unusual degree, resemble him in holiness of life. The disposition, in both cases, is the same in quality, though it may differ in degree. It springs from a natural aversion to holiness as a principle of religion, and extends to all those in whom holiness abounds. It arose, like all other evil dispositions, from the fall of Adam, and soon discovered itself in the conduct of Cain, one of his own immediate descendants, who slew his brother, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

The same malignant disposition has never

ceased to pursue and afflict the Church of Christ. The violence with which it has harassed the righteous, has generally risen and fallen with the rise and fall of the true spirit of religion, and with the zeal and purity of those who taught it. Upon our Saviour and his Apostles, therefore, it raged with peculiar animosity. Nor has it ever ceased to exercise its hostility upon his true disciples in any age of his Church. It varies, indeed, at different times, in the mode, as well as the violence of its operation. But it is never altogether quiescent. It is always at work either secretly or openly, and its effects are at all times more or less perceptible. "All," we are told, "who will live godlily in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." That holiness of character which renders them a savour of life to the righteous, excites the enmity and aversion of the wicked. The fragrance which it emits is too pure and strong for their depraved sense, and the ministers who diffuse it, are to them, from the sanctity of their characters, as an offensive odour, as a savour of death.

But they are a savour of death to them also, by virtue of their labours, as teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the strongest proofs, and most deplorable consequences, of a depraved free will, is the frequent and deliberate perversion of the goodness of God to which it leads. There is no divine gift, however good in itself, which men do not constantly abuse, and turn into an instru-



ment of evil. Even the gospel of Christ, the richest of God's mercies, is not exempted from such abuse.

The greater part of Christians, indeed, can hear the awful discoveries of the gospel continually announced to them, and still remain insensible or regardless of their importance. This, however, is an abuse of the gospel, which arises not from want of grace, or want of aptitude in those discoveries to excite the attention and impress the hearts of men, but from wilful opposition or want of consideration. But of such incalculable moment are those discoveries in themselves, that it would seem difficult to conceive how they can pass under the serious review of any man, and gain a firm hold of his understanding, without producing those strong convictions and emotions of mind, which are incompatible with a state of religious neutrality. The standard of duty which the gospel sets up is so rigidly holy, the sacrifices which it requires of those who embrace it, are so severe, and the penalties of rejection so awfully tremendous, that he who is sensible of its importance, yet does not resolve to adopt it, has no resource left for pacifying his conscience, but to reason it down in his own mind, or to close his eyes and harden his heart against it. How frequently mankind fly to this fatal refuge, is too evident both from scripture and experience. It was foreseen and predicted long before the introduction of the gospel into the world. The Messiah was to be not only for

a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. He was set for the fall, as well as for the rising again of many in Israel. He affirms that he came, not to send peace on earth, but a sword, and that a man's foes should be they of his own household. Not that these are the designed, or the proper effects of the administration of the gospel, but the indirect consequences of the pure word of God operating on human depravity, and, like the Sun in the firmament, hardening those objects which it cannot soften. They are consequences which are chargeable, not upon the gospel itself, but upon the wilful perversion of it. Though men have eyes, they will not behold its light. Though they have ears, they will not listen to its voice. Though they have reason, they will not weigh its evidence, nor understand its truth. Is it surprising, then, that God, merciful and long-suffering as he is, should at length withdraw his spirit from incorrigible offenders, and turn that dispensation into a curse, which was intended as a blessing? Is it surprising that Christ should come for judgment upon the haughty and intractable, as well as for mercy to the humble and the docile? That not only they which see not, might see, but that they which see might be made blind?

This natural revulsion of the human heart at the sanctity of the gospel in them that reject it, with all its fatal consequences, was as conspicuous under the ministry of our Lord and his Apostles as the power of the gospel was to convert and

save those who embraced it. Of those who attended our Saviour's ministry, some believed, we are told; and some believed not. Some forsook all and followed him in the regeneration; and some went back and walked no more with him. Some regarded him as acting under the special authority of God; and some, as the agent of Satan. Some delighted in his doctrines, loved and adored his person; some rejected and derided both, and persecuted him with implacable malice, even unto death. Though he revealed to them truths of most momentous interest; though he spake as never man spake, and taught them as one having authority from God; though he accompanied his doctrines with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, and adorned and recommended them by personal example of spotless innocence and perfect holiness; yet, when he came to survey the effects of his ministry, as it drew to a close, He was constrained not only to upbraid those cities in which most of his mighty works had been done, because they repented not, but to weep over the folly of Jerusalem, and of the whole Jewish nation, because they knew not the things which belonged to their peace, till they were hidden from their eyes, and finally to leave them to that hardness of heart and contempt of the gospel, and to that judicial blindness, in which, as a nation, they continue to this very day.

In the hands of the Apostles also the gospel produced the same incongruous effects. While

to those who believed it, whether Jews or Greeks, it proved the power of God and the wisdom of God, to the Jews, as a body, it became a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Such have been its effects, in a greater or less degree, at all times, in the hands of the Christian ministry; and such they remain to the present day. It still continues to blind those whom it does not enlighten, and to harden those whom it does not soften. To men of this character, who are resolved, at all hazards, to prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, to the holy discipline, and solid benefits of Christ's religion, the gospel is an instrument of death. Carnally-minded, and at enmity against God, they have no delight in the law of God after the inward man. They have, on the contrary, an inward aversion to it, are not subject to it, neither indeed can be. Its exclusion from their thoughts, therefore, is necessary to their peace of mind. And so long as they can keep it out of view, conscience slumbers on, and gives them little disturbance. Without the law, they are alive. But when the commandment comes; when the law is held up to their view in all its extent and purity, and pressed with earnestness upon their conscience, sin, hitherto entombed in a dark conscience, revives and appears in its true character. Sin revives, and they die. The motions of sins, of which they were before unconscious, but which are fully discovered by the law, are now seen to work in their members to bring forth fruit unto death. And thus

is sin made to appear sin, working death in them by that which is good ; and the commandment of God, which was ordained unto life, is found by them to be unto death. But though the law, by exhibiting a perfect rule of moral rectitude, may discover to them the extent of their delinquency, and, by the curse which it denounces upon them, may wound their consciences, and excite their fears, it does not necessarily follow that it will humble their hearts and end in Christian conversion. Although it was intended as a school-master to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith ; and although the first steps to this end are a deep conviction of sin, and a fearful apprehension of the wrath of God ; yet unless such conviction and apprehension be actually followed (which is far from being always the case) by humility, repentance, and faith in Christ, they will eventually harden the heart, and increase its native enmity both to the law and the gospel ; and the ministers, in consequence, will be to all such persons a savour of death, of death unto death. The fragrantcy of the knowledge of Christ which ministers are appointed to diffuse, and which, to others, is so grateful and reviving, is, to them, an offensive odour, which, while it withers and dissolves the enjoyments of the present life, reminds them of death ; of the dominion of the grave, and of that second death, the death of the soul, which awaits them beyond it.

I proceed to the consideration of the last point of discussion, viz.

III. The arduous and important duties of the ministerial office, arising from the view which I have taken of the two former propositions.—“ Who is sufficient for these things ?”

Who is sufficient,

1. To sustain that high and holy character which becomes his relation to Christ, to God and mankind ?—or

2. To preach the gospel in such a manner as to become, in consequence, like our Lord and his Apostles, a saviour of life and death to them that hear him ; and to sustain that awful responsibility which attaches to his office ?

1. Now it is evident that nothing but real holiness of heart, nothing but an inward sanctity of principle, can satisfy his relation to Christ and to God. Nor can any thing short of an outward decorum of conduct, corresponding to such an inward principle, fully answer the expectations of mankind.

Most arduous, however, is the process of forming and sustaining such a holy and decorous character. The obstacles which the depravity of our own hearts, the seductions of the world, and the devices of Satan, throw in our way, are so formidable, that nothing but the co-operation of the grace of God, and of our own strenuous, ceaseless endeavours, can enable us to overcome



them, and to attain to that spiritual mindedness, that congruity of temper with Christ, which is necessary to make us unto God a sweet savour of him. Such a holy disposition, however, is not only inseparable from our *union* with Christ, and necessary to secure the favour of God, but it is the only sure foundation of that outward decorum of conduct which is essential to ensure the good opinion of the pious and virtuous part of mankind, and to promote the interests of true religion.

But it is a matter of great difficulty, of arduous exertion, even for the most pious ministers to maintain that measure of propriety of conduct which is expected of them even by those who are but slightly acquainted with the doctrines, and but slightly imbued with the spirit of Christianity. Very little penetration will enable them to discern the relation which subsists between the truths of the gospel and the personal conduct of those who teach them. For such is the sublimity of the doctrines of the gospel, such the holiness of its precepts, and such the authority of its sanction, that men of ordinary understandings can at once see how holy ought to be the conduct of those, whose peculiar province it is to proclaim these things to others, how holy, not only in sanctity of principle, but in abstraction from every thing of a vain, frivolous, and worldly nature. They can at once see how widely different ought to be the deportment of such men from that of the world at large, how much more their affections ought to be withdrawn from this

world, and set on things above, how much more their conversation ought to be in heaven.

Of this truth, I fear, ministers are not always sufficiently aware : they are apt to imagine, that because the generality of men lightly regard the duties of religion themselves, they will therefore, favourably construct the conduct of its teachers. But nothing can be more illusive. For whatever the frivolous or the dissipated may think, it is certain that the sober and reflecting part of society, (to whose collective decision we must have recourse, on all occasions, for the standard of public sentiment) entertain much higher views on this subject, than might, at first sight, be imagined from their general conduct.

In proof of the truth of this opinion, I shall lay before you the sentiments of a writer whose extensive and acute observation on general decorum of character, qualified him in an eminent degree, in point of talent, to condense the public judgment on this subject, and whose dubious attachment to Christianity preserved him from overrating the sanctity of its precepts, or the qualifications of its ministers.

“ The man,” says he, “ whose peculiar occupation it is to keep the world in mind of that awful futurity which awaits them, who is to announce what may be the fatal consequences of every deviation from the rules of duty, and who is himself to set the example of the most exact conformity, seems to be the messenger of tidings which cannot, in propriety, be delivered either



with levity or indifference. His mind is supposed to be continually occupied with what is too grand and solemn to leave any room for the impression of those frivolous objects which fill up the attention of the dissipated and the gay. We readily feel, therefore, that, independent of custom, there is a propriety in the manners which custom has allotted to this profession; and that nothing can be more suitable to the character of a clergyman, than that grave, that austere, that abstracted severity, which we are habituated to expect in his behaviour."

"These reflections are so very obvious, that there is scarce any man so inconsiderate, as not at some time to have made them, and to have accounted to himself in this manner for his approbation of the usual character of this order." (Dr. Adam Smith.)

But if such be the general opinion of the usual character of clergymen, formed according to this author, from a view of religion in the abstract, without any direct reference to the exalted doctrines and duties of Christianity, how loudly does it call upon the ministers of Christ to attend to the public voice touching the propriety of their official character! It shews how strict an inspection is exercised over their behaviour, and how much is required of them, even by those who are but slightly acquainted with the spiritual nature and true character of the Christian religion. How arduous then must it be to sustain that higher measure of decorum which is necessary

to satisfy the expectations of the more pious part of the public, of those who adjudge them by the light of the gospel, and to render them to all such a savour of life unto life!

But the opinion to which I have here alluded, being raised on speculative grounds, does not necessarily imply any practical sense of religion whatever in those who form it. It is a mere act of the judgment, in which the heart has little or no necessary concern. It is very possible, therefore, and by no means uncommon, for men to judge with tolerable precision of clerical decorum, while they feel little of that love and hatred of ministers which are implied in the text. These dispositions, in the sense of the text, are the result of a faithful and energetic application of the gospel to the consciences of men, by which the feelings and affections of their hearts are awakened into full exercise.

Great, however, is the difficulty, and great the responsibility, which attend the discharge of this part of the clerical office; so great, indeed, that no man who is duly sensible of their nature and extent, can view them without trembling anxiety, and without frequently asking himself who is sufficient,

2. To preach the gospel in such a manner as to become, in consequence, like our Lord and his Apostles, a savour of life and death to them that hear him; and to sustain that awful responsibility which attaches to his office?

Admitting that his sufficiency is virtually of God, there is ample scope, and urgent necessity for all the professional accomplishments which he can attain ; as well as for all the energy he can exercise in the proper application of them.

A comprehensive and profound knowledge of Scripture, of human nature, and of the diversified experience of Christians, great judgment in applying his knowledge to their various capacities and wants, great anxiety for their salvation, deep convictions of the importance of his labours, warm zeal, stedfast patience, exalted charity,—these are all essential to the perfect discharge of the ministerial office, that the gospel may produce its full effect upon the minds of men, and render its teachers a savour of life and death to them who hear it.

It is unnecessary to observe how difficult it is to attain to these qualifications in any considerable degree, or how arduous is the application of them, when attained, to the conversion and edification of sinners.

For these purposes a full and faithful exposition of the law and the gospel is absolutely necessary. The law must be applied, as a rule of moral rectitude, to the judgment and conscience of men, to convince them of the extent of their transgressions, and of their inability to keep it. The curse, the inexorable curse, which it denounces upon all those who, in the slightest degree, violate its precepts, must be rigidly enforced, to convince them of their danger, to humble them, and to lead them

to repentance and a turning to God. By such an use of the moral law, aided by the coincident, and still more awakening truths of the gospel, sinners are sometimes brought to that spiritual change of disposition, which is the first necessary step to their salvation.

But the difficulty which attends this branch of ministerial labour, may readily be inferred, not only from the natural enmity of the human heart to the law of God, but from the small number of those who are actually turned from Satan unto God. However fit the law and the gospel may be in themselves to produce this important change, and however wisely and faithfully they may be applied for this purpose, the great body of sinners still continue unaffected and uninfluenced by them. And of those who seem to have been awakened to a proper sense of their guilt and danger, to have repented of their sins, to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and to be walking worthy of their new vocation, some draw back and walk no more with the Saviour, and contract a greater aversion to his gospel and his ministers than they felt before.

But the difficulties which ministers have to encounter in preaching the gospel, do not terminate with the conversion of sinners. Leaving the first principles of the oracles of God, they are to assist their new converts in their progressive advancement towards Christian perfection. They are, through divine grace, to build them up a holy temple unto the Lord. They are to apprise

and to warn them of the dangers to which they are exposed from the allurements of the world, the suggestions of Satan, and the treachery of their own hearts. They are to conduct them, by a diligent and faithful application of the doctrines and precepts, the promises and threatenings of the gospel, through the various gradations of holiness of heart and life, till they come unto perfect men, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. But how difficult, how arduous, yet how important is the faithful discharge of this part of a Christian minister's duty. How great are the knowledge, the judgment, the holiness, the zeal, the perseverance which are necessary to qualify him to discharge it in such a manner as to render him a saviour of life unto life to Christians of the most exalted attainments !

If his office, however, as a teacher of the Gospel, be one of great difficulty and of great importance, it is also a trust of great responsibility. Though sensible that he is nothing more than an instrument in the hands of God, and that God alone can give increase and fruit to his labours, yet when he seriously considers how intimately connected his labours are with the salvation and perdition of the souls of men, he cannot view his situation without a deep conviction of the awful responsibility which rests upon him. However great may be his qualifications, and however great his diligence in the exercise of them, a strong sense of his own insufficiency must always accompany his exertions. He can never contemplate

the influence which his ministry may have upon the eternal happiness or misery of men ; without serious apprehension lest, through incapacity, error, negligence, or wilful opposition, he should fall short of the proper discharge of his duty, and impede the efficacy of the gospel, which it is alike his duty and his desire to promote, and lest he should prove a savour of death to those to whom he might have been a savour of life, and bring upon his own head the blood of those who perish.

While he carefully cherishes, however, such an awful apprehension of his responsibility, and a due sense of his own incompetency, let him remember that his sufficiency is not of himself, but of God, whose strength is made perfect in human weakness. Let him remember that St. Paul did not attribute the efficacy of his ministry to his own accomplishments for the office, but to the power of God in Christ. "Thanks be unto God," says he, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." He regarded himself as an instrument in the hands of God, and presumed upon nothing more than the integrity and fidelity with which he discharged the trust of preaching the Gospel which God had imposed upon him. "We are not as many," says he, "who corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

Let all other ministers, then, in the exercise



of their sacred function, imitate the conduct of this holy Apostle. Under a like apprehension of the awful responsibility which rests upon them, let them employ, with the same sincerity, the same earnestness, the same fidelity, the gifts which God has bestowed upon them. And under a like sense of their own insufficiency, let them look, in humble dependence to God, through Christ, for strength to support, and grace to help them, in the discharge of their arduous duty. Then, weak as they may be in themselves, they will be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. He will cause them to triumph in Christ, will make manifest the savour of his knowledge by them, and enable them to sustain, with comfort, the responsible trust committed to them.

Should it be thought that, in the discussion of the foregoing propositions, I have placed the subject in too strong a light; that I have given to the ministers of religion a character to which human nature, under all the advantages of the gospel, can never attain; have assigned them duties which they can never fully execute; and ascribed to their ministry consequences which rarely if ever ensue; I answer, that, admitting the truth of the assumption, it affords no valid argument in the present case, which will not bear with greater force against the law, the precepts of the gospel, and the examples of our Lord and his Apostles.

I trust, however, that I may safely appeal

in many instances, to the character of my Clerical Brethren, and to the effects of their ministry upon their hearers, in defence of the manner in which I have treated the subject, even on the ground of practical attainment. But I shall pass over all such instances, and direct your attention to those more conspicuous, extensive, and contrasted effects, which the silent and protracted operation of the gospel has produced upon the public mind.

To say nothing of those charitable institutions which were reared by our forefathers, there are others of modern growth, many of which, being of a more religious character, seem to afford a more specific and decisive proof of the powerful operation of the gospel, than those which distinguished former times.

Whether we look at the number, magnitude, and operations of those Christian societies which have been formed within the last century for the propagation of the Scriptures into every region of the globe ; at the means which have been provided for the education of the poor ; at the pains which are taken to furnish them with books of religious instruction, accommodated to their capacities and wants ; at the multiplied accommodations for the relief of bodily and mental affliction ; at the measures which have been adopted, and are still agitated for the abolition of slavery ; or at other modifications of public charity ; at the general diffusion, and liberal exercise of private benevolence, which adorn beyond any other period the present age, or at the fruits which have arisen from these



various means of human improvement—we see enough to convince us, after all due allowance has been made for the intrusion of other causes, that the effects of the operation of the gospel are very powerful and extensive, and that it proves, as well as the ministers who teach it, to thousands a savour of life unto life.

Nor are those effects, on the other hand, much less apparent, or less extended, which prove it to be to others a savour of death unto death.

That spirit of infidelity which, both at home and abroad, has long been sapping the foundation of christianity and the governments which support it; that virulent, pertinacious, and revolting blasphemy; that open contempt of God's word, and of the laws of the land which acknowledge its divine authority; that insolent defiance of the executive power which we have all of late witnessed, and by which the feelings of the nation at large have been so deeply wounded; the indefatigable, the combined exertions which are made, by the abettors of this abandoned system of opposition to every human and divine institution, to force it, through the medium of the press, under every form, and by every mode of communication, into the remotest ramifications of society; the deep-rooted enmity, and open hostility which they discover to our order, and the misrepresentation and calumny with which they endeavour to degrade us in the estimation of the public, and to destroy the efficacy of our labours—these, these are effects which, though attributed in some degree probably

to political considerations, are, however, chiefly and ultimately to be referred to the love of darkness rather than light, to an inherent aversion to the purity of the gospel, and to its indurating operation upon the hearts of those whom it cannot soften and convert, by which both it and the ministers who teach it, are made unto them a savour of death unto death.

How well does the description which St. Jude gives of the reprobate of his own time apply to the characters of the men of whom I am speaking.

“These filthy dreamers,” says he, “defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities:—speak evil of those things which they know not. But what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves:—clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruits; twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”

These general effects of the operation of the gospel demonstrate its influence upon a large scale, and shew what we have to expect from it on a smaller in our congregations, and even in private families, whenever it is brought fully to bear upon the several members, and may serve to vindicate the strictness with which I have treated the subject.

I hasten to close the subject with a few practical reflections suitable to the present occasion.

The first point which presents itself under this character, is the deep attention which is due from us to the state of our own hearts ; to that personal holiness which is necessary to our union with Christ, which commends us to God, and forms the only proper basis of the sacerdotal character. If we be destitute of this essential qualification, we are worthless in the sight of God, useless to mankind, and, in proportion to the sense of our condition, dissatisfied with ourselves.

It is essential, indeed, to the character and comfort of every true Christian, that he should have in him some measure of the same mind which was in Christ Jesus. But the congruity may subsist under every variety of degree, from the faintest resemblance of the divine image, up to that measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ which was the high prerogative of inspired Apostles. But if less gifted Christians in aftertimes cannot attain to the same exalted standard of holiness, as these highly privileged servants of God, they may still rise to such a measure of it, as will ensure to them, through the merits of Christ, the divine favour, and the tranquillity of their own conscience. And surely of all orders of men in the Christian Church, there are none whose spiritual attainments should rise higher than those of the ministers of religion. For separated as they are from all worldly avocations, and dedicated solely to the service of God, and the advancement of religion, they are placed in a condition more favourable to the cultivation of personal holiness than the

rest of the community. Will not God, then, and will not mankind, exact of them a greater sanctity of principle and of conduct, and a nearer approach to the character of Christ? Undoubtedly. For it is an unquestionable maxim of Holy Scripture that "to whom much is given, of them will be much required." And why are they styled in the gospel "the lights of the world," and "the salt of the earth," but to denote, not only their high office as the teachers and conservators of religion, but their personal qualifications, their enlightened state of mind, their pure, their wholesome conduct?

Let us labour, therefore, with all diligence, to cultivate inward piety, or holiness of heart, as the animating principle of the ministerial character. And that we may be stimulated to aim at as high a gradation of attainment as possible, let us consider how holy we should be in heart, how strong our resemblance to Christ, that we may be unto God a sweet savour of him, that we may be identified with him in the spirit of our mind, as the branch is with the vine, or the members of the body are with the head, that we may be fit temples of the Holy Ghost, and that God may dwell in us and we in Him.

The next point which demands our practical regard, is the state of our own personal character, in reference to the opinion of men, or the outward and habitual expression of the inward principle of holiness. Such an inward principle is, as I have already observed, the only proper foundation of

external decorum of conduct, and the best security we can have for a zealous, consistent, and faithful discharge of our duty to man, as well as to God. But though it may secure us from intentional obliquity, it may not always preserve us from errors of judgment. Failure of duty is, I admit, much more likely to spring from want of piety, than from want of judgment. But it is possible for the most pious to contract erroneous views of holy Scripture on clerical propriety of conduct, as well as on any other subject, and to think that they honour God, and do him service, in proportion to the freedom with which they reject all human opinion which does not accord with their own. Such an exclusive reliance upon their own judgment, is too often allied to want of charity. By magnifying things of less consequence into matters of the greatest moment, and enacting, in all instances, an equal attention to both, they are apt to generate discord and alienation of affection among their brethren. They would contribute, therefore, to the benefit of religion, and the peace of the Church, if they would sometimes consult the sentiments or practice of those of their Brethren, who are most eminent for sound judgment and propriety of conduct, as well as for real piety: not, indeed, with a view to supersede the use of Scripture, but to avail themselves of the best human assistance and direction in their power, for correcting those errors of judgment and improprieties of temper and conduct, into which themselves may have fallen, in the interpretation and application of Scripture.



But the greatest danger to Clerical decorum arises from a contrary cause ; from want of piety, rather than of judgment ; from a defect of personal holiness, and of that ardour of devotion which springs from a deep sense of the importance and responsibility of the Clerical office. And if some, in the warmth of their zeal, push their views of propriety beyond the limits which sound discretion, or the spirit of the gospel requires, and seem too rigid and exclusive in their personal deportment, there are others, it is to be feared, who fall short of that lower standard of character which the public voice has prescribed, and who, by frivolous amusements, secular habits, and unhallowed conformity to the world, impede the progress of religion, and bring discredit upon the sacred order.

It is surely, then, a matter of great consequence that such persons should be frequently and solemnly reminded of the sober and settled opinion of the reflecting part of the community respecting the decorum of the Clerical character, that they may see how little countenance and support they can derive to their present habits, even from this lowest standard of ministerial duty. A deep conviction of this truth might lead them to higher views of professional character. It might lead them to a closer study of that holy Apostolical conduct which the constitution and spirit of our own Church require of all her ministers, and without which they cannot administer her services either with consistency or with com-

fort. And it might finally conduct them to a more serious contemplation and imitation of the conduct of our Lord and his Apostles, the models which all Christian ministers should have perpetually in view, and on which they should form their own characters.

With a view to these higher considerations, therefore, I would earnestly recommend to my clerical Brethren, and especially the younger part of them, a careful attention to the public opinion respecting their official conduct and character. And let it never be forgotten, that there is no profession in which an unsullied reputation is of so much importance, as in that of a Clergyman : none in which the utility of his labours depends so much upon the personal estimation in which he is held for integrity and consistency of conduct. For on that estimation it depends, in a great measure, whether he shall prove to others a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

Such a regard to personal reputation, in subjection to higher motives, is of great consequence at all times. But there are seasons in which it is of greater importance than at others. At the present period, when such indefatigable combined exertions are making to destroy that prescriptive reverence which was once so generally paid to the clerical order, the most sedulous attention to personal character is necessary to sustain its reputation. That reputation, and the utility which arises from it, must henceforth rest, in a greater degree than at any former period, upon intrinsic

worth of character, upon that inward sanctity of principle, and outward decorum of conduct, which I have been inculcating.

Let us all, then, pay a due attention to personal character. Let us carefully study, and steadily pursue, whatever becomes and adorns that character. And let us resolutely deny ourselves all such frivolous enjoyments, and worldly compliances, as may impair the religious principle, secularize the conduct, and debase it in the estimation of the wise and good. Such a regard to personal character in the sight of God and man, is the best preparation, and the best security for that earnest and faithful preaching of the gospel which is necessary to give it its full effect upon the consciences of men, to render it a savour of life and death, and to deliver those who preach it from the blood of those that perish.

Be it our next care, then, to attain such a deep and accurate acquaintance with holy Scripture, such a firm persuasion of the momentous consequences of our labours, such a lively concern for the salvation of our people, and such an awful view of the responsibility of our ministry, as may qualify us, as instruments in the hands of God, to urge the gospel home upon the hearts of men, to rouse them from those deep slumbers of conscience in which so many of them are buried, and to make it the power of God, to their salvation, and a savour of life to their souls.

Let us remember, however, that our sufficiency, after all, for the discharge of these arduous and



important duties is of God, and is derived to us through Christ. “Thanks be to God,” says the Apostle, “who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.” While we duly employ, therefore, the talents which we possess ; while we cultivate inward sanctity of heart, and outward decorum of conduct ; while we preach the gospel with purity, sincerity and earnestness, as an instrument of life and death to the souls of men,—let us keep a constant eye upon our alliance with Christ, and look up to God, through him, for wisdom to guide and strength to support us in the discharge of our sacred and responsible trust, and for his blessing upon our labours.

Thus will our labours be blessed : blessed to ourselves, as well as to our hearers. Being unto God a sweet savour of Christ, we shall be to many a savour of life unto life. And if, to others, we prove, unwillingly, a savour of death, we shall be free from the blood of all men. Thus shall we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. Thus shall we make full proof of our ministry. Thus shall we shew that we are not as many which corrupt the word of God, or handle it deceitfully, but that, as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.





THE IMPORTANCE  
AND  
NECESSITY OF RELIGION

TO  
*National Education,*

AND TO THE  
RIGHT APPLICATION OF ALL HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

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A SERMON,

PREACHED

*On* SUNDAY, *September* 18, 1825,

*In the* ABBEY CHURCH, ST. ALBAN's,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

THE BLUE COAT CHARITY SCHOOL

*ESTABLISHED,* IN THAT TOWN.

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BY THE REV. THOMAS BARBER, B.D.

RECTOR OF HOUGHTON CONQUEST, BEDS.  
AND LATE FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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1825

IMPRIMATUR.

J. PROCTER, *Pro-Can.*

*Aul. Cath.*

22<sup>do</sup>. Nov. 1925.

TO  
THE WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR,  
THE  
LORD HIGH STEWARD,  
THE  
RECORDER, ALDERMEN, AND BURGESSES  
OF  
**The Ancient Borough of St. Alban,**  
THE  
FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,  
PUBLISHED BY REQUEST,  
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
BY  
THE AUTHOR.



# A S E R M O N,

&c. &c.

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PSALM LXXVIII. 5, 6, 7, 8.

*He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.*

THE moral history of all nations, whether rude or refined, concurs in proving, that reason alone is an insufficient guide in matters of religion, and that it was an act of great mercy in God to establish a testimony in Jacob, and to appoint a law in Israel, more expressive of his will, and more declarative of his authority, than the law of nature.

The design of this gracious dispensation was not merely to check the wickedness and improve

the morals of the existing generation of the Jewish people, but to provide for their progressive advancement in religion in future times, to prepare the way for the introduction of Christianity, and for the universal diffusion and observance of the laws and will of God throughout the world.

The accomplishment of this great object, depending not only upon the fidelity with which the testimony and law of God should be observed by those to whom they were first delivered, but upon the faithful communication of them to succeeding generations ; God commanded the patriarchs, the fathers of the Jewish people, “ that they should make them known to their children, that the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children.”

Thus a provision was made, by domestic, parental instruction, for the improvement of future ages ; in order that the children which should be born, might set their hope in God, and not, like their fathers, forget the works of God, but keep his commandments, and that every succeeding generation might be better than that which had gone before it.

The importance of this command, therefore, as well as the authority of him who gave it, laid the Jews under the highest obligation to obey it with great care. But ought it to be restricted to one nation alone? Must not the religious improvement of the world at large, in all ages, depend, in a great measure, upon the fidelity with which it is



obeyed? And is it not, in subjection to Christianity, as binding upon one nation and one generation, as it is upon another? All nations, indeed, are not equally qualified to carry it into execution; because all nations are not equally acquainted with the revealed will of God. The Jews were universally prepared to execute it; and, as far as the letter of it went, faithfully discharged their duty. But this is not the situation of any people at the present day; not even of the most enlightened. So profound was the ignorance in which the world was sunk previous to the Reformation, and so slowly have even the Protestant States emerged from the darkness which then enveloped them, that there are thousands of poor parents in this intelligent country, who are disqualified, not so much by their poverty, as their ignorance, to instruct their children, either in the doctrines and duties of religion, or in the rudiments of other useful knowledge. They are unable to fulfil the injunction in the text. It is an act of great charity, therefore, to assist them in carrying it into effect, by affording to their children that instruction, which they themselves are unable to give them. Hence the necessity, and hence the importance, of schools of charity, like that in support of which we are now assembled. And that we may render the occasion as subservient as possible to the object which we have in view, I will endeavour, through divine grace, and in conformity to the tenor and spirit of the text, to shew the necessity and importance of making the inculcation of religion an indispensable part of the

education of mankind. With this view, let us consider,

- I. What we are to understand by the testimony which God established in Jacob, and what by the law which He appointed in Israel.
- II. How the command was appointed to be carried into effect by the Jews, and how far they actually obeyed it.
- III. How far it is applicable to ourselves as Christians, and how far the wealthy and intelligent part of the community are bound in charity to supply the inability of the ignorant to fulfil it, by providing for the religious instruction of their children.
- IV. The great importance of this kind of charity, to the improvement, not only of the present, but of future times, and to the eternal salvation of the souls of men.

I. What, then, are we to understand by the testimony which God established in Jacob, and what by the law which He appointed in Israel?

In the translation of this Psalm, contained in the Book of Common Prayer, the word *testimony* is rendered *covenant*; "He made a *covenant* with Jacob, and gave Israel a law." By the "testimony in Jacob," therefore, is to be understood the covenant which God made with Abraham, and which He confirmed with an oath to his descendants, Isaac and Jacob: a covenant, in which He promised exceedingly to bless Abraham, to make

him the father of many nations, to give him the land of Canaan, a type of heaven, for an everlasting possession, to be to him a God in an especial manner, and to his seed after him, in their generations, and, in his seed, to bless all the nations, and all the families of the earth.

By the law appointed in Israel, is intended the moral law, consisting of the ten commandments, and of such other moral precepts as were delivered from time to time by his servant Moses, and also the ceremonial law, comprising a variety of sacrifices, oblations, festivals, purifications, and other rites, peculiar to the Jewish people.

Now these several communications were designed, not only to preserve the memory of the signal dispensations of God to the Jewish nation for the time being, and thus to awaken and sustain their gratitude and fear, to restrain their stubborn, rebellious disposition, and to lead them to keep his commandments; but to engage their hopes in the promises of God, with respect to their future interests, and to prepare their posterity for the introduction of that covenant of grace and truth, which, in the fulness of time, was to be established by Jesus Christ. To Christians, indeed, who view them by the light of the gospel, in which they have their accomplishment, they appear well adapted to answer this ulterior design. For the testimony established in Jacob, or the covenant made with the fathers, looking beyond the temporal interests of a single nation, pointed decidedly, though in general terms, to spiritual blessings of

infinitely greater value, which were to be conferred, through the seed of the woman, the Messiah, on the whole human race. The moral law, extending its authority to the thoughts, as well as the actions, of men ; and annexing a curse to the slightest transgression of its precepts ; was calculated to convince them of the impossibility of being justified in the sight of God, by the deeds which it required, and to dispose them to embrace that method of pardon, which was shadowed out by the offering up of Isaac, and by the sacrifices and other rites of the ceremonial law.

Thus it appears that the testimony established in Jacob, and the law appointed in Israel, were intended, not only for the benefit of the passing generations, but as a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith ; Christ being the end of the law to every one that believeth. How important, therefore, was it, that they should be carefully handed down from age to age ! And how seasonable the admonition of the Psalmist,—“ be ye mindful always of his covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations ; even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac, and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant.”

Let us, then, enquire,

II. How the command was appointed to be carried into effect by the Jews, and how far they actually obeyed it.

The law, contained in the five books of Moses, being completed, was deposited in the ark of the covenant, and the king, when he sat upon the throne of his kingdom, was commanded "to take a copy of it, that he might read therein all the days of his life: that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of that law, and of those statutes, to do them." Moreover, "Moses delivered the law unto the priests which bore the ark of the covenant, and unto the elders of Israel; and Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose; thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing." Before the captivity, this appears to be all that was done to preserve the memory of the law. And though, after that event, synagogues were built, and the law read and expounded in them every sabbath-day; still all this was but an inadequate provision. The mind of man, as well as his body, requires a daily supply of food to sustain the life and power of religion within it. But how was this to be attained? The art of printing not being invented, books were unattainable by the common people, even if they could have read them. To remedy this difficulty, the command in the text was given. Every father was to be the priest of his own family, and was enjoined to make the law a subject of daily study, and familiar conversation among his children, and to mingle with his instructions such relations



of the mercies and terrors of the Lord towards their own nation, as were calculated to make a deep impression upon the tender minds of their children, to preserve the memory of the divine dispensations, and to dispose them to love and fear God, and keep his commandments. "Take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life, but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons." "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the post of thine house, and on thy gates."

Thus was the want of books to be supplied by oral instruction, and thus the memory of the testimony in Jacob, and of the law in Israel, to be preserved, and handed down by word of mouth from father to son. But how far was the command complied with by the Jews? In a moral and spiritual sense very imperfectly.

Reading the law with a veil upon their hearts, and attending to its literal sense, and temporal authority alone, they discerned not its spiritual character and intimate relation to the Christian dispensation. When Christ came, therefore, he found little faith upon earth, and little preparation

for his advent. He found the most learned of the Jews bigoted, hypocritical, and depraved: more disposed to pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, than to attend to the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith. The moral, spiritual, and typical nature of the law being thus disregarded, the command in the text was very imperfectly fulfilled under these characters. But, in a literal sense, they had punctually obeyed it. For we are told by an historian of their own, that so perfectly were they acquainted with the laws and institutions of Moses, in the time of our Saviour, that the most illiterate among them could answer any question, touching those laws and institutions, with the utmost promptitude and accuracy: a fact which proves how effectually knowledge, when once spread through the community, may, with very little aid from the press, be transmitted from age to age, and how faithfully the Jews had obeyed the letter of the command in the text, while they had totally departed in practice from its genuine spirit and chief design.

We may here learn a lesson of useful instruction. We may see how grossly the highest privileges may be abused, and how useless is the knowledge of our duty, unaccompanied by the practice. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Then let us profit by the blindness, and the casting away of the Jews. And if they, because of unbelief, and the abuse of the means of grace, were broken off, that we might be grafted in, and stand by faith, let us not be high minded,



but fear. "For if God spared not the natural branches, let us take heed lest He spare not us." Let us never forget, that the means of grace, and the knowledge of our duty, are so far valuable only, as they serve to make us better men: more faithful, more obedient to the will of God. Let us bear this in mind, while we proceed to consider,

III. How far the command in the text is applicable to ourselves as Christians, and how far the wealthy and intelligent part of the community are bound, in charity, to supply the inability of ignorant parents to fulfil it, by providing for the instruction of their children.

Now the moral law is equally applicable to all: to Christians as well as Jews. And though the covenant made with the fathers, and the ceremonial part of the law, being preparatory institutions and shadows of good things to come, are not binding upon Christians in the same way they were upon the Jews, yet the knowledge of them, as well as of the code of prophecy, is necessary as parts of the plan of revelation, and more especially for the perfect understanding of the gospel. Christians, therefore, should regard the command in the text as including the whole body of Scripture, and as applicable to themselves, though in a different manner, as well as to the Jews. Holy Scripture is the only source from which sound religious instruction can be drawn, and ought to be made, along with the elements

of other kinds of knowledge, an object of the most sedulous attention in the education of mankind.

How far, then, has the command of God, in this extended sense, been fulfilled by the Christian world; and what farther co-operation, on the part of the rich, the intelligent, and the charitable, is necessary for its full and perfect accomplishment?

Although the canon of Scripture has been completed nearly eighteen hundred years, yet how small a portion of mankind are at present in possession of it! And of those who have it, how few there are who really understand it! What powerful causes have hitherto retarded the progress of knowledge of such infinite consequence to the well being of mankind? These, no doubt, were many. One of the principal was the slow and expensive process of multiplying copies of the Scriptures, by hand-writing, during many centuries previous to the invention of the art of printing. This circumstance operated as a check upon education. For what would have been the use of teaching the art of reading, when books were not to be attained? Another and a still more powerful cause, was the policy of the Roman Catholic clergy, who denied to the whole body of the laity all access to the word of God, by locking it up in a dead language, which none but themselves understood. The consequence was, that at the time of the Reformation, when several of the countries of Europe, and our own among

the rest, separated from the Romish communion, the whole Christian world was involved in the most profound ignorance, and the most degrading superstition. The bulk of the people knew little or nothing of the testimony established in Jacob, of the law appointed in Israel, or of the doctrines and duties of Christianity; and were, therefore, not in a condition to obey the command in the text. What then was to be done for their relief?

The first step that was taken to spread the knowledge of religion, was to translate the Scriptures into the vernacular tongues of the Protestant States. In our own country, a national liturgy was framed for the use of public worship, and the word of God expounded to the people on the sabbath in their own language.

But what were these measures alone? Although the Scriptures had been translated into our own language, and although the art of printing, by which copies might be easily multiplied, had been recently invented; there were yet so few individuals who could read them, that a single copy, chained to the desk of the church, was the only one to be found in most parishes, for a considerable time after the Reformation. To remedy this defect, our forefathers began to turn their attention to the education of the people, and to call in the aid of the press to the service of religion. For this end they built and endowed schools of permanent foundation, and adopted other similar, though more casual and temporary means, for the instruction of the poor.

For the education of the clergy and the higher orders of the community, a provision had been made before the Reformation. Large preparatory schools, and Universities, munificently endowed, had been founded for this purpose, and, falling into the hands of the Protestant community at that eventful period, have greatly contributed to the general diffusion of that knowledge which now pervades the public mind, and have reared up a multitude of men, whose genius and learning have shed an inextinguishable lustre upon their country, and exalted its literary renown above that of all other nations. Neither time nor season will allow me even to glance at the diversified labours of such a host of men, nor even to record their names.

There is one individual, however, whose name is so closely connected with this place, and to whose profound writings the “advancement of learning” is so much more deeply indebted than to those of any other person who ever adorned our history, that I feel an irresistible temptation to deviate, in some slight degree, from the direct course of our present pursuit, to pay a tribute of respect to his illustrious memory.

It is unnecessary for me to say, that I allude to the Lord Chancellor Bacon. The memory of a man so eminently great, must be peculiarly dear to the inhabitants of a place from which he derived his title of honour, near which he spent many of those precious hours which he devoted to the investigation of the state of human knowledge, of the means of extending and perfecting

it, and to one of whose sacred temples his ashes have been consigned.

But it is not from these local considerations alone, however grateful to your feelings, that I have introduced the name of this great man to your remembrance; but because his labours and his writings are, in some measure, connected with the object of our present meeting, the promotion and diffusion of useful knowledge. Not that I mean to assert, that he ever founded or endowed schools, or composed books, for the specific purpose of instructing the poor. No. This would have been a misapplication of his time and talents. His intellect was formed and designed for more profound, for more exalted labours: for correcting the errors, supplying the deficiencies, and directing the views of philosophers; the highest order of his intellectual fellow-beings.

Those exalted endowments of the mind, which rarely concur in the same person, but which, united in solitary eminence with other ordinary talents, are sufficient, when carefully cultivated, and judiciously displayed, to conduct their possessors to great and deserved celebrity, were combined in Bacon in pre-eminent and singular perfection. To those faculties of the understanding, which constitute a profound, solid, and piercing judgment, and fit the mind for a patient and protracted investigation of the most intricate processes of nature, and to fasten and dwell upon her most subtle distinctions, in all her diversified operations; were united in him those chaste, vi-



gorous and capacious powers of the imagination, which enabled him, with the skill and taste of a poet, to illustrate and adorn his most profound, as well as his lighter productions. By the assiduous exercise of talents so eminently great, he was enabled, not only to descry and expose the aberrations into which former philosophers had been betrayed, in their pursuit of knowledge; but those constitutional tendencies to error, and those accidental and conventional fictions of the imagination, by which they were led astray. The same capacious intellect enabled him also to take a comprehensive survey of the whole compass of human knowledge, to examine its separate and distinct regions, and to estimate their several deficiencies, and to frame new rules of investigation, by which those who should come after him might supply those deficiencies, by pursuing truth with more certainty, and advancing learning of every kind with greater rapidity and success.

Not contented, however, with submitting to mankind a naked series of philosophical axioms, for the guidance of their future speculations; he proceeded to establish their truth, and to illustrate their utility, by a great variety of well conducted experiments, and a long chain of legitimate induction. And if he did not prosecute these researches farther, and accomplish more, it was not owing to any error in the principles on which he proceeded, nor to any want of talent or industry in their application; but to the want of time and opportunity. His philosophical labours, great,

important, and difficult as they were, were the fruits of those precarious intervals of leisure, which he was able to snatch from the exercise of a learned and laborious profession, and from the weighty, distracting cares of State.

Limited and imperfect, however, as those labours necessarily were, they were sufficient to produce a radical change in the method of philosophizing, to give a new and powerful impulse to the pursuit of truth, and to conduct her able and patient followers to the most eminent success. Names the most illustrious in the records of science, both at home and abroad, by whose writings the boundaries of knowledge have been greatly enlarged, and the literary history of their country greatly distinguished, are to be numbered among his pupils, and a portion of whose glory is reflected back upon their great master.

But it is not only as a philosopher that the character of Bacon is entitled to the admiration of mankind. He was great, eminently great, as a lawyer and a statesman. These, however, though the functions by which he was chiefly distinguished among his contemporaries, are, perhaps, in the estimation of posterity, the least valuable and illustrious parts of his character, and those on which he himself looked back with least complacency and satisfaction.

Happy had it been for his own peace of mind, and for his own literary reputation, happy for the interests of science and of letters, had he been



left to the exclusive prosecution of those philosophical speculations, for which, by nature, he was so admirably fitted. It is impossible to calculate the progress which he might then have made towards the accomplishment of that comprehensive undertaking, the restoration and advancement of human knowledge, in all its variety and extent, of which his other avocations permitted him to do little more than to digest the fundamental principles.

If less was done, however, by this great man, than he might, under more favourable circumstances, have been able to accomplish, for the benefit of science; he has left behind him enough to excite the astonishment and gratitude of posterity, not only in philosophy, strictly so called, but on other subjects of the greatest moment. His writings, unlike those of many other philosophers, are as subservient to morality and religion as they are to philosophy. They abound with reflections on these subjects as remarkable for their originality and truth, as for the chaste and sober richness of expression with which they are conveyed, and equally honourable to his character as a christian and a philosopher. In those parts of them in which he professedly discusses the nature and effects of human knowledge at large, he lays it down as an indisputable and indispensable axiom, that religion, (the legitimate mother of morality) drawn immediately from the fountain of divine truth, the Holy Scriptures, is the only principle which can effectually correct the evils

incident to knowledge, in the hands of a being so weak and depraved as man, and render it a real and substantial blessing to him.

Such a decided and repeated attestation, from such a man, of the supreme importance of religion in the pursuit and application of knowledge, had surely been entitled to the highest consideration and regard, had he rested it solely on these general grounds. But he has gone farther. In some theological disquisitions, which, among his other labours, he has fortunately bequeathed to mankind, he has described, with incomparable talent, his own clear views and explicit sentiments on religion. In the form of a creed, and under the express name of "a confession of faith," he has recorded his own interpretation of the word of God, and his firm assurance of its sublime and momentous truths. In this singularly fine production, he takes a comprehensive but condensed view of the dispensations of God to the human race, from before the foundation of the world to the consummation of all things, of the mysteries of redemption, and the doctrines of the Christian religion, in a train of thought, and a style of composition, which display, to an unrivalled extent, those capacious and solid faculties of the understanding, and those excursive but chaste powers of the imagination, for the happy union of which he was so highly distinguished.

What degree of influence these admirable theological productions may have had upon the minds of his philosophical readers, it may be

impossible to decide. But certain it is, that of those who have followed his footsteps with most fidelity and success, in the arduous investigations of physical science, the most illustrious are eminently distinguished for their moral and religious writings. Newton, Locke, Boyle, Berkley, and others of great philosophical attainments, studied, believed, revered, and expounded the Holy Scriptures themselves, and recommended them, both by their writings and example, to the belief and practice of others. Happy had it been for the world at large, had his example, in this respect, been more generally followed. How much infidelity, and how much consequent misery, had then been prevented! How much more honourable and illustrious had been the characters of many learned men! How much more profitable and secure, the path to knowledge! May all who shall hereafter peruse the philosophical writings of Bacon, study also with deep attention his profound views of religion, and learn, from his example, to ascribe to it that supreme authority over all other species of knowledge, which he has so wisely and so justly assigned to it\*.

But time compels me to pause in this digression, and to return to the more immediate subject of our present meeting. I trust, however, that what has been said, touching the character and writings of this great man, will not be deemed altogether irrelevant to the object of the

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\* Vide Note at the end of the Discourse.

present assembly. For though the writings of Bacon were designed more especially for the benefit of philosophers, yet such has been their influence on the public mind, that, by rendering knowledge of every kind more useful and desirable, and the attainment of it more certain, they have contributed to produce that more ardent and general pursuit of it, which pervades the higher and middle classes of society, and is fast descending among the lower orders.

The establishment and long-continued support of the excellent school before us, are the fruits of the same generous spirit. It was established, like many others of a like kind, to supply the inability of parents to fulfil the injunction in the text. To institutions of this kind, and to Sunday Schools, we owe much of the diffusion of that knowledge among the poor, which distinguishes the present from former times. By their instrumentality, considerable progress has been made towards carrying the command in the text into effect. Thousands of poor parents have been thus qualified to act as the priests and instructors of their own families: to make known to their children the testimony established in Jacob, and the law appointed in Israel, as well as the doctrines and duties of the gospel. And the strenuous and universal exertions which are now making to impart instruction to the poor, and the modern improvements in the mode of communicating it, afford strong reason to believe, that the art of reading, accompanied by elementary instruction,

will soon be spread throughout the community. When that day shall arrive, the community will be placed in a new and a peculiarly interesting condition : a condition in which no nation of the earth has yet been placed : a high and precarious, if not a perilous condition.

If knowledge were an abstract, unmingled good, the more men had of it, and the more widely it were extended, the more perfect would be the frame of society, and the more happy its individual members. But this is by no means the case. For "knowledge," says Bacon, "is of those things which are to be accepted of with caution, distinction, and limitation." While it enlarges the powers of the human mind, it combines with it no necessary, inseparable security, for the right moral application of them. And unless it be accompanied by a good disposition, it may become an instrument of great mischief, both to the possessor himself, and to others. It was the intemperate thirst after the proud knowledge of good and evil, with an intent to give law to himself, and to depend no more upon the commandments and prohibitions of God, as the rules of good and evil ; no more upon God's will revealed, but upon himself and his own light as a God, that occasioned the original fall and ruin of man.

So it is with his posterity. Men at all times aspire after knowledge, not as a handmaid to religion, not as a preservative from unbelief and sin, not as an incentive and help to obey the will,



and exalt the glory of God, not as an instrument of utility to their fellow-creatures; but for the selfish and sordid purposes of ambition, curiosity, pleasure, profit, reputation, and power.

These, however, are not the legitimate ends of knowledge; and, separated from the influence of religion, are frequently productive of more harm than good, both to individuals and to the community. They often add more to the pride, than to the improvement, of mankind. By ministering to them weak fears, or unreasonable desires, they produce disappointment, mortification, and perturbation of mind, instead of solid peace and lasting satisfaction.

In conducting the education of the middle and lower classes of society, there must always be considerable danger, lest, by over-educating them, we should render them unfit for, and discontented with, the station in life in which Providence has placed them: lest, by giving them an undue estimate of the temporal advantages of knowledge, and of their own attainments, we should encourage expectations of rising in life, and of bettering their condition, which are incompatible with the constitution and progress of society. And may it not be justly questioned whether the difficulty of finding situations in life for young persons, suitable to their education, now so generally felt and complained of, and the serious evils which frequently ensue from disappointed expectation, on this head, do not prove that education is pushed beyond its proper bounds,

or injudiciously conducted ; and whether, in many cases, it does not turn out a detriment, rather than a benefit to individuals as well as to the public ?

To avoid or correct these evils, and to render education a private and public blessing, two things are especially necessary : one, to accommodate the instruction given, both in kind and degree, to the situation and circumstances of the various classes of society ; the other, to regulate the application of that knowledge, by the principles and power of religion. “ All knowledge,” says the same high authority, “ must be limited by religion, and applied to use and action.” Under these conditions, education cannot be too generally and too zealously advanced. And in subjection to these conditions should every institution in the kingdom for the instruction of the rising generation, of whatever rank or condition, be scrupulously and faithfully conducted. It would then prove a blessing, both temporal and spiritual, to the public at large, as well as to the individuals immediately concerned.

It is with great pleasure, therefore, that I have learnt that the school before us is conducted on these principles, and that the conduct of the scholars, in general, has been such as to prove the excellence and utility of the plan you pursue.

Nor can you pay too discriminating an attention to the nature and extent of the information which you communicate to the children, who are the objects of your charity, the principles of



religion which you inculcate upon them, or the pious discipline to which you inure them.

Such a cautious and deliberate course is the more necessary, in proportion to the general diffusion of knowledge, good and bad, and the consequent influence of the press on the public mind. That influence is already very extensive. It is daily increasing. The rapidity with which education is descending through the lower ranks of society, promises speedily to lay open the minds of the people at large to its full and mighty operation, and to render it an engine of incalculable consequence to the dearest interests of the nation.

To form some general notion of what it may accomplish in future times, when the minds of all orders of men shall be exposed to its full influence, we should consider what it has already done. Four hundred years have not yet elapsed, since it began its operations. And yet what prodigious stores of knowledge has it already furnished on every subject of human enquiry! And how great are the treasures which it is daily pouring forth into the hands of the public! How rapidly does it multiply the copies of all productions, and how speedily does it propagate information of every kind throughout the kingdom!

By the operation of the press, which forms one of the grand distinctions between ancient and modern times, knowledge is not only spread through the world for the time present, but it is preserved from future extinction. Its existence is perpetuated. Before the invention of printing, writings

of every kind were confined to a few copies, written by the hand, which might be easily destroyed, and the knowledge contained in them irrevocably lost. This was actually the case, to a great extent, in former times, when the barbarous nations from the north and east broke in upon the Roman empire, and swept away most of the treasures of Greek and Roman learning.

For the preservation of the slender relics of that learning, we are chiefly indebted to such venerable institutions as this, under whose sacred roof we are now assembled. In the Abbeys and Monasteries which were scattered through the civilized world, those classical productions which we now enjoy found a refuge, in which they reposed in safety, during those many centuries of ignorance and rapine that preceded the Reformation, and which, but for such seasonable shelter, had utterly perished. Assembled, then, within the walls of one of those ancient institutions, to which we are possibly indebted for the conservation of some of those admirable works of antiquity which are at once the instruction and delight of the learned; while we gaze upon these venerable pillars, the relics of that institution, which time has spared us, let us not forget the obligations which we owe to those catholic establishments which alone could afford safe custody to productions of so much value.

The records of learning, however, no longer stand in need of such a precarious protection. Neither the ravages of time or of war can ever

again, in like manner, sweep them away. The press has effectually secured the world against any such disaster in future. It has spread its stores too wide to admit of such an occurrence. It has provided for an endless accumulation of the treasures of knowledge, and opened a field of illimitable extent for the improvement or degradation of the human species.

Were all the productions which it sends into the world of a truly moral and religious character, it would be the greatest of earthly blessings. But this, we know, is far from being the case. For as of that unruly member, the tongue, it is said, "therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God, so that out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing;" so is it with the press, which at one time teems with the word of God, at another labours with profane, libertine, infidel productions; is at one time engaged in support of religion, at another, in its extinction; now, in furnishing the head with solid information on subjects most important to the well-being of man, now, in filling it with frivolous, mischievous notions; now, in correcting, now, in feeding the native depravity of the heart; now, in promoting the unity and peace of the Church, now, in dividing, distracting and irritating her children; now, in defence of order and good government, now, in fomenting discord, faction, sedition, treason, rebellion; now, in the vindication of private reputation, now, in the propagation of private

calumny ; now, in enlarging the kingdom of God and his Christ, now, in extending the empire of sin and Satan.

If the press, therefore, has done great good, it has done no inconsiderable harm. Need I point to instances of its mischievous effects? Need I direct your attention to the influence which it had in producing that awful convulsion in a neighbouring country, which kept Europe in a state of warfare for more than twenty years, and whose tragic effects are still felt throughout all its provinces? Need I call to your remembrance the infamous productions of Voltaire, Rousseau and others abroad?—the insidious but dangerous writings of Hume and Gibbon, or the open infidelity and revolting blasphemy of Pain, Hone, Carlisle and others, at home? Need I refer you to that multitude of publications, of every shape and size, which are constantly circulating through the community, whose object and tendency are to subvert the authority of Holy Scripture, and to corrupt and debase the public mind?

These are some of the licentious and mischievous effects of the press, which all good men deeply deplore, and which have made so strong an impression upon the minds of some, as to lead them to question whether it is not more injurious than beneficial to the happiness of man. But this is carrying the matter too far. For whatever partial mischiefs it may hitherto have done, or might occasion in future, were it left to human agency alone ; there can be little doubt, but that

the wisdom and goodness of God will so controul, will so overrule and direct its operations, that it shall finally redound to his glory, and to the benefit of the human race.

In confirmation of this assurance, there are strong indications in the general spirit and tenor of the present times. Never was there a period, in the history of this or of any other nation, in which the professors of religion were so zealous and active in disseminating the Scriptures, and other congruous publications, for the instruction of all orders of readers. The number and magnitude of those societies which have sprung up of late years in such rapid succession, whose special purpose it is to circulate and teach the sacred oracles, both at home and abroad, is a striking proof of the truth of this observation.

Not only has the Established Church her societies for the promotion of christian knowledge, for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts, for the circulation of the Book of Common Prayer and the Homilies of our own Church, and for missions abroad; but every denomination of Dissenters has its own particular society for like purposes, while both Churchmen and Dissenters are combined in that astonishing institution, of modern growth, the British and Foreign Bible Society. What prodigious stores of the word of God have already been issued by the united operations of these several institutions! How many cottages have thus been furnished with it at home, which might otherwise have remained destitute of



it, and how easily may every person in future obtain a copy, who shall be able to read it!

But the opposition to infidelity and irreligion, manifested by the temper of the present times, is displayed, not only in the combined exertions which are thus made for the extensive circulation and exposition of the Holy Scriptures, but in that prodigious multitude of kindred publications, which are constantly issuing from the press, accommodated to the age, the wants, and capacities of all classes of readers. Such, indeed, is the number, and such the variety, of these works, that it is a matter of no small difficulty to decide upon those which are best suited to our purpose.

If the enemies of religion, therefore, are exerting themselves with unusual activity and co-operation, in spreading their pestilent productions, and in converting the press into an engine of moral, religious and political mischief; its friends are still more extensively and closely united, and still more actively and resolutely employed, in engaging that mighty instrument of good and evil, in the propagation of the word of God as widely as possible, and in the inculcation of its doctrines and duties, in every practicable way, upon the public mind.

This is a consolatory reflection to the friends of religion and good order, especially at a time when the public mind is speedily to be laid open to the full influence of the press, an engine already greatly abused, and extensively pernicious, yet capable of producing, in the hands of bad men, still greater and more formidable evil. This consideration

may serve to allay, in a great degree, the fears of those who are apt to anticipate more evil than good from the influence of the press, and the general education of the lower orders. It may also serve to encourage those who are of a different opinion on these points, to persevere in their generous and useful labours. Let them be careful, however, to pre-occupy the minds of their pupils with sound moral and religious principles, to mould them into habits of pious discipline, to a taste for devotional reading, and to furnish them, on quitting their schools, not only with the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, but with other subsidiary publications, adapted to their capacities and improvement, with which the press has so seasonably and so abundantly supplied them.

Thus prepared, they may be able to resist the evils with which they shall be assailed, to maintain the integrity of their principles and character, and to hold fast the profession of the christian faith without wavering. Their education will then be a blessing to them. It will enlarge their capacities, it will improve their faculties and dispositions, it will regulate their passions, it will increase their power of doing good. They will become better christians, and, consequently, better men, better subjects, better neighbours, better parents, better children.

Thus knowledge, guided by religion, and accompanied by a good disposition, is a blessing, not only to individuals, but to society at large; and the more widely it is spread, the greater is the blessing. Let it never be forgotten, however,



that the blessing arises, not from the simple communication of knowledge in the abstract, but from knowledge limited and directed by religion. All that can be said of knowledge in itself, abstractedly considered, is, that it increases the power of its possessor. But it is a power which may be employed in the production of evil as well as good. And it depends upon the disposition of the possessor, to which of those ends it shall be directed. If that disposition be good, it will increase his capacity of doing good ; if evil, of accomplishing mischief. How important, then, is it, that knowledge should always be accompanied by a good disposition of mind ; and how momentous, that religion should form a part, a principal and inseparable part, of the education of mankind !

But if this conclusion be well grounded, does it not place such institutions as that which is about to be established by Act of Parliament in the Metropolis, from which all study of theology and religion is designedly and expressly excluded, in a very dubious and questionable light ?

If I have dwelt thus long, my brethren, on the importance of religious instruction, it is not to arraign the education which you are giving to the children before us, of which I am happy to learn, that religion forms a material part ; but in conformity with the spirit and tenor of my text, to confirm your satisfaction in the plan you have adopted, and to strengthen the claims of the institution to your future support.

We proceed to consider,

IV. The great importance of this kind of charity to the improvement, not only of the present, but of future times, and to the eternal salvation of the souls of men.

Of charity, true christian charity, it may be said, what cannot be affirmed of knowledge or power in the abstract, or of some other dispositions of the mind, that, as a principle of religion, it can never be carried to excess. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself."

The stronger the principle, however, the greater are the caution and discrimination which are necessary in the regulation of its exercise, when applied to the benefit of our neighbour. For while his necessities, and his claims upon our charity are widely different, as to their pressure and importance, our means of supplying them are, in a greater or less degree, very limited. To apply the scanty succours which we can command, therefore, to so extended a gradation of claims with the greatest advantage, great judgement is necessary in distinguishing the relative importance of those claims, as well as great caution in regulating the strength of the actuating principle of our charity, lest it should hurry us on to an indiscriminate and disproportionate application of our means. The intrinsic excellence of charity, indeed, as a principle of christian religion, is the same, whatever be the respective merits of the objects on which we exercised it; whether we exercised it on the

bodies or the minds of men, whether on their temporal or their eternal interests, whether we administer a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ, or convert a sinner from the error of his way, and save his soul alive. But though the principle of charity be the same, whatever may be the consequences of its exercise, it is evident, that the degree of benefit arising from its exercise, both to ourselves and others, is very different. And of all the modifications of which it is capable, that is the most important and useful, which relates to the improvement of the mind of man, and to the promotion of his spiritual and eternal interests. The benefit arising from the relief of his temporal necessities, and the advancement of his temporal good, though a legitimate object of charity, is, however, of transient duration, and derives its chief value from its subserviency to the higher ends of mental and religious improvement. It is this consideration which stamps so high a value upon that species of charity, which we are now called upon to exercise, and which raises it in importance, far above every other.

That knowledge and discipline which the friends of this charity are kindly communicating to the children, will enable and dispose them to discharge their duties to God and man with more diligence and fidelity, with more benefit to society, and more comfort and credit to themselves. It will enable and dispose them to fill up their stations in life, either as individuals or parents, with greater ability and propriety, and to improve their

own temporal condition, not only without injury or annoyance to others, but with greater advantage to the public.

Nor will these benefits, either to themselves or to others, be confined to the times in which they live. For knowledge, once communicated to a mind imbued with the principles, and inured to the practice of religion, may reasonably be expected to descend from the father to the son, and to the son's sons, and thus contribute to the progressive improvement of future generations. This is the most important property, and the most powerful recommendation, of a sound moral and religious education. While the effects of other kinds of charity are, for the most part, of transient existence, those which arise from the communication of mental improvement, may not only continue, but increase, throughout successive ages. For what parent, what well disposed parent, who has experienced the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of true religion himself, would not endeavour to impart them to his children, and these again to their descendants in unlimited succession? And who can calculate the beneficial consequences of the gradual and perpetual advancement of mankind in useful knowledge and true religion, not only upon the interests of this life, but of the next? Numerous and formidable, indeed, are the impediments, in a world like this, by which that advancement is interrupted and retarded. Still, however, education, conducted upon a large scale, on religious principles, and

continued through a long course of time, can hardly fail to increase the improvement, as well as the knowledge of mankind, from age to age. To what other causes can we chiefly attribute the superiority of this nation over heathen countries, or of the present times over those ages of ignorance, disorder, and irreligion which preceded the Reformation?

Viewing education, therefore, as the chief instrument of national improvement, in successive generations, it well deserves our support from its effects upon the interests of men in this life, as well as in the next. And under this view of the subject, the children before us should be regarded, not as individuals in whom the effects of your charity are to terminate, but as conductors of knowledge and improvement to others: as instruments by which the benefits of that instruction which you are giving them, are to be transmitted to their children, and to their children's children, for the progressive improvement of future times. This consideration increases their importance as members of society, renders their education, in some measure, a matter of national consequence, and stamps a higher and more lasting value upon that charity, which you are about to exercise in their behalf, and by which you liberally provide for, and promote their instruction.

But the great, the preponderating consideration, in the business of education, is the preparation of men, by the aid of knowledge and religion, for a future and more exalted state.



For this end, religion formed an inseparable part of the education of the Jewish people. For this end, they were to make known to their children the testimony in Jacob, and the law in Israel, "that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." The present life is but the commencement of an existence of endless duration. The kingdom of heaven, though not of this world, must be entered upon, however, and prosecuted in this life. In this life, short as it is, and full of obstacles, must be formed that image of God upon our hearts, that holy habitude of soul, which is necessary to prepare us to pass, by a smooth and easy transition, out of time into eternity: from the church militant here on earth, to the church triumphant in heaven: from the society of holy men, to the society of holy angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect.

Viewed in connection with our eternal condition, every thing which can promote, in the remotest degree, our fitness for that society, is a matter of great consequence. Nor should that fitness ever be lost sight of, in the education of the rising generation, from the earliest infancy, any more than in the after conduct of their lives. To promote and ensure this supreme object, we ought to address our chief and strenuous endeavours, both in the principles which we instil into their minds, and in the holy discipline to which we habituate them. Their education would then be subservient to their eternal good. It



would then be an introduction to a more exalted state, in which the faculties and dispositions of the soul, freed from the incumbrances which now oppress them, and furnished with objects of contemplation, more exalted and more conducive to their improvement, would continue to improve to all eternity, and gradually to assimilate the soul in knowledge, holiness, and happiness, to Almighty God.

Such, then, being the ultimate end of all good education, let me entreat you, my brethren, to whom the instruction of these children is confided, to keep this end constantly in view. Regard them as immortal beings, whose eternal happiness greatly depends upon the manner in which they are trained up from their infancy. Adjust their education to their eternal interests. Labour, under divine direction, to inculcate upon their infant minds, the doctrines and duties of christianity, to raise their views to the promises and hopes of the gospel, and to imbue them with a spirit of true piety.

While your chief aim shall thus be to prepare them for the kingdom of heaven, you will effectually secure all the subordinate ends of their education. By founding their education on christian principles, and by training them up into habits of true piety, you will fit them to discharge all the relative duties of their station, you will fortify them against the temptations of a corrupt world, against the dangers of a licentious press, and provide for the transmission of useful know-

ledge, and true religion, to the generations to come, more completely than you can do by any other course. Their children, who shall arise, setting their hope in God, and keeping his commandments, shall make known to their children the testimony established in Jacob, and the law appointed in Israel, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Thus shall you, under the divine blessing, contribute, through the education of these poor children, to the progressive improvement of all future generations of men, as well as to the salvation of the children themselves.

And can any other argument be necessary to excite you to persevere, with growing assiduity, in so charitable and useful a cause? Let it be remembered, however, that no system of education can be carried on without adequate funds to support it. And, since the children who are the objects of your care, are clothed as well as instructed, and since the supply of these wants depends, in a considerable degree, on the fruits of this annual contribution, I am constrained to implore you to open wide your hands, and liberally to give of that substance with which God has endowed you, for the support of this excellent charity.

I have no fears that you will, on this occasion, desert an institution which you and your forefathers have nourished with so much liberality for more than a century; or that you will withhold any share of that bounty which you have hitherto afforded it. The steady support which

you have rendered it, during so long a course of years, is the best assurance I can have of the unabated continuance of your bounty. On this assurance, therefore, grounded upon experience so long continued, and so honourable to your predecessors, as well as to yourselves, I shall firmly rely for the exercise of your wonted beneficence, on the present occasion.

It is a gratifying spectacle to behold our dissenting brethren assembled with us, on the very spot where the first christian church in Britain was reared, and the blood of the first christian Martyr flowed, in the bond of charity, to contribute their pecuniary aid to the benefit of an institution, in the direction of which they have little share\*. It is highly creditable to their christian liberality, and entitled to our friendly thanks and acknowledgements. May this spirit of friendly and liberal intercourse continue to subsist between us and our dissenting fellow-christians, and may it please Almighty God so to ordain it, that we may meet together in heaven, there to witness the happy fruits of our united christian charity, in the salvation and endless glory of these poor children.

Finally, my brethren, let me gently remind you, in conclusion, of the high importance of a spirit of true charity, not only to the objects of


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\* The Dissenters have been in the habit of closing their own places of worship, and of attending the Abbey Church on the anniversary of this Sermon.

your bounty, but to yourselves. "It is more blessed," we are told, "to give than to receive." The exercise of charity, not only implies a better condition, with respect to this world's goods, than that of our poorer brethren, on whom we bestow it, but it tends, beyond all other dispositions of the heart, to promote our own improvement and happiness, and has the promise also of the divine blessing. There is no christian virtue which possesses so much of the essence of true religion as charity or love. Other dispositions, however well directed, tend to excess, and produce perturbation. But charity, true christian charity, directed to God and our neighbour, can never be too powerful, too active, or unfavourable to inward tranquillity. On the contrary, the more powerful and active it is, the more it assimilates us to God, who "*is love*," and the more it settles, composes, and felicitates the soul. Even faith and hope, excellent as they are, derive their chief importance from the support they yield to charity. They are her appointed and legitimate associates. Their office (which is confined to the present life) is to feed her with heavenly succours, to support her under the heavy trials and discouragements which she has to encounter in the world, and finally, to bear her away from this terrestrial scene to heaven, her native abode, where, having accomplished their office, they shall cease, shall be swallowed up in fruition, while charity, which never faileth, shall continue to animate and improve the soul to all eternity.

But, if such be the happy influence of charity upon those who possess it, how important is it to their own personal happiness, that they should carefully cultivate and improve it. And since nothing conduces more to strengthen and improve it than frequent exercise, let us lose no favourable opportunity of reducing it to practice. Let us remember, for our encouragement, the many blessings which God has annexed to its exercise. So amiable, indeed, is charity in the eye of God and our Saviour, that every instance of its exercise, however trifling in appearance, even a cup of cold water bestowed upon a disciple of Christ, shall receive its appropriate reward. What then shall be the reward of those, the object of whose charity is the present and eternal good of the souls of men; who shall be the happy instruments, in the hands of God, of converting sinners from the error of their ways, and of training them up, in the ways of religion, to a fitness for the kingdom of heaven? Their reward shall be of the most exalted description. For we are assured, in figurative but most forcible and expressive language, that they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever. How glorious, how animating is this assurance! How great is the influence which it ought, at all times, to have upon the minds of christians! Let it, then, have its full influence upon our minds. And as a suitable opportunity of proving its power, is now presented to us, let us, in obedience to the will of God, and in the

name of our Lord Jesus Christ, give liberally of the substance which God has lent us, for the temporal and eternal good of these poor children. Let us, in the true spirit of our religion, make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness : friends of God, of Christ, and of the angels of light ; that, when all earthly friends and interests shall fail us, they may receive us into everlasting habitations.





NOTE. See page 19.

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THE observations and reflections introduced into the body of the foregoing discourse, are intended to afford the reader such a general view of the character and writings of Bacon, as may give weight and authority to the sentiments of the Author, as to the importance of making religion the supreme object of attention in the education of mankind, and to expose the mischievous effects which are likely to arise from institutions from which the study and culture of religion are professedly banished.

The Author, however, is desirous of embracing the present opportunity of calling the attention of his readers to the inadequate respect which has hitherto been paid, by the public, to this eminent man, and of suggesting, with becoming humility and diffidence, the propriety of erecting a statue to his memory, in the University or College, of which he was a member.

It might seem extraordinary, at first sight, that productions so eminently original and useful, should have engaged but a very moderate share of the attention and admiration of his contemporaries, especially of his own countrymen. In this, however, the fortune of Bacon was by no means singular. The literary history of our own country, to say nothing of that of other nations, furnishes us with several instances of a like kind, not only in works of a deep and intricate, but of a popular, character. Not only were the works of Newton, but even those of Shakespeare and Milton, imperfectly understood, and inadequately esteemed by their contemporaries. This, indeed, must always be the case, in a greater or less degree, when authors, like Bacon and those just mentioned, rise so much above the general attainments of the age in which they live; especially when they attempt to subvert old established systems of error, and to introduce innovation on subjects of the highest moment. The contemporaries of Bacon were not

prepared either to admit so radical a change in the method of philosophizing, or to follow him in the arduous process of investigation and proof, by which he laboured to confirm and establish it. Nor is it probable that their political prejudices, which were by no means slight, would have suffered them to give full weight to his speculations, had they thoroughly understood them.

By foreigners, however, his writings were somewhat more ably and impartially estimated, and his name treated with more respect. Of this he was well aware. For in the commencement of his will, that solemn instrument, in which men may be supposed to form the most sober judgment of their own characters, and of the estimation in which they are likely to be held by posterity, after "bequeathing his soul and body into the hands of God by the blessed oblation of his Saviour, the one at the time of his dissolution, the other at the time of his resurrection," he adds, "for my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and the next ages." He had too deep an insight into human nature, and too just a sense of the merits of his own writings, not to foresee that a day would arrive, when posterity, freed from temporary associations and prejudices, and viewing his character through the medium of his works alone, would do that justice to his memory, which he could not look for from his own times, and his own country.

That he was chargeable with errors and delinquencies, in his public capacities and stations, cannot be denied. But these chiefly affected the times in which he lived, and on which those times took ample and severe vengeance. Having driven him from his high official station, stripped him of all political authority, and of most of his honours and emoluments, they exacted ample atonement for the injuries he had done them. And such was the severity of the chastisement which they exercised upon him, that if it did not shorten his days, (an admission which, perhaps, may justly be doubted,) at least greatly embittered the shades of retirement.

But "foreign nations, and the next ages," passing by the frailties and offences of the statesman, and looking, through the medium of his works and writings, at the author alone,

have done more honour and justice to his memory. They have studied his works and writings with sober, dispassionate attention. And, faithfully pursuing his unerring rules of investigation, they have been led to the most profound and useful discoveries, by which the sciences have been greatly augmented and improved, and by which, to use his own words, "that durable part of his memory, which consisteth in his works and writings," has been irrefragably established, his own sagacious prediction fully verified, and his fame rendered co-extensive with science itself. So far all is well, and as it should be. His name is honoured and revered by the learned, and is recorded and celebrated in their works. Of this kind of homage, however, he has received as ample a share from foreigners, as from his own countrymen; and, though, of all others, the most durable and enviable, yet it is surely not the only kind which is due to him from the country, on which he has conferred such signal and lasting benefits. And it may be justly questioned, whether his countrymen, "of the next ages," have discharged their duty to his memory to the full extent of their obligations. For great as is the consideration in which he is held by those who fully understand, and duly appreciate his labours, yet the number of these is comparatively small, while no visible monument, to convey their sense of his transcendent merits to popular reverence and esteem, at present exists, which is at all worthy of those merits, or of the country which gave him birth.

Private gratitude, indeed, has raised a statue to his memory in the church in which he is buried: and a bust, an admirable bust, adorns the library of the college in which he was educated. But no public monument, suitable to his rank and dignity as a philosopher, has yet been erected to excite the reverence of those who are unable to appreciate his fame from his writings. And yet, how many persons have been distinguished by such proofs of public gratitude, who have done infinitely less honour and service to their country!

Is it not greatly to be regretted, that the University in which he was bred, and of which he was so illustrious an ornament, should never have marked her sense of his merits by such a tribute to his memory? Here, above all other places,

it might be expected that his genius and writings should be accurately adjudged, and duly venerated. And yet, even here, there is nothing beyond a painting and a bust, to testify the admiration in which his name is held by his pupils, or their gratitude for those signal services which he has rendered to science. This is the more remarkable, as his attachment to the University appears to have been strong and steady. For at an advanced period of his life, and in the height of his power, he expressed an anxious concern for her prosperity, as well as for that of his own College, and recommended to the members of both an earnest pursuit of science, according to that experimental, inductive process, which himself had invented, and which has since been followed with so much success.

He also left instructions in his will, that copies of his works should be given to the libraries of the University, of Trinity College, and of Corpus Christi, the college in which his father had been bred. Surely, then, gratitude, as well as justice, demanded of the University something more than a bare acknowledgment of her obligations to a man who had done her so much service, reflected so much honour upon her character, and manifested so firm an attachment to her interests.


And is it too late to cover her past default, and to shield her in future from the charge of indifference to the memory of one of her brightest ornaments? No. Time may strengthen, but can never impair the obligations which she owes to the name of Bacon. For he is unquestionably entitled to some portion of the credit arising from every subsequent discovery and improvement in science, which shall have been made through the instrumentality of that method of investigation, which he himself established and recommended. And in this sense Newton himself is not without his obligations to Bacon. Yet Newton is honoured with a statue. And who is there that ever questioned the justice or propriety of such a mark of distinction? Who is there that ever gazed with admiration upon that eminent specimen of art, that did not silently approve the judgment, gratitude, and liberality of those who dedicated it to his memory?

And shall Bacon be denied a distinction which has been so justly conferred upon Newton? Shall the pupil be honoured beyond his master? Surely, if the claims of Bacon were duly weighed, the distinguished services which he has rendered to science, and the honour which his name reflects upon the University of Cambridge, there could be little difficulty or reluctance in raising such a monument to his memory. Such a measure, it may be presumed, would be peculiarly acceptable to the College of which he was once a member: a College which stands pre-eminent above every other institution in the world, for the number of illustrious men which it has produced. Of these, Bacon was one of the most illustrious. To the memory of such a man, too much honour and respect can scarcely be paid by a Society on which he has shed so bright a lustre. Nor can it be doubted, that any efforts which might be made by that Society for the accomplishment of such an object, would be generously met and assisted by that spirit of improvement, which now pervades the members of the University, both within and without her precincts. Such a measure would not only do honour to those who should promote it, but might be productive of great benefit to the University, and to the public at large. For whatever contributes to extend the knowledge of Bacon's writings, contributes to the promotion, not only of science, but of morality and religion. And there probably never was a time at which those writings might be made more generally useful, than at the present moment. For they are calculated, beyond all other productions, to correct the pride and vanity of superficial attainments (the sure and fruitful issue of general education), and to expose the dangers which are likely to arise from those institutions, for the communication of knowledge, from which the study of religion is designedly and totally excluded. The soundness of those writings, therefore, and the high authority to which they are entitled, might render them eminently useful at the present times. And any public mark of respect, paid to the memory of their author, which should lead to a more extended perusal of them, would confer an important benefit on the public. And what could contribute more effectually to the accomplishment of so desirable



an object, than the erection of a statue, from the chisel of a Chantry, which should rival the efforts of a Roubilliac, in the bosom of the University or College in which he was educated, and which, by exciting the admiration of her students, might lead them to a more general and ardent study of his works, to imbibe his comprehensive and clear views of knowledge and religion, and to spread and establish them in the world.

Should this humble publication fall into the hands of any of those admirers of Bacon, who possess influence enough to set such a measure on foot; and should the observations made in this note, and in the body of the Sermon, on the character and writings of this great man, meet their approbation, and engage them to exert that influence in the way suggested, the Author will deem his time and pains well spent, and will be happy to contribute, in the event of its being undertaken, his mite towards its accomplishment.





*By the same Author,*

THE CHARACTER and OBLIGATIONS of CHRISTIAN  
MINISTERS: a Visitation Sermon, preached at the  
Parish Church of St. Paul, Bedford, *April 8, 1823.*

*Parton on the City*

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